

Hon. Tim Bishop  
July 17, 2006  
*Iraq watch*

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Connecticut, Mr. Larson, for yielding. I commend him for his leadership in organizing these hour-long discussions to examine the Administration's failed policy toward Iraq, and I am proud to join him and my distinguished colleagues this evening.

When the President declared Iraq, Iran and North Korea as the "axis of evil" during his 2002 State of the Union, who could have imagined the world would be more threatened by these rogue nations 4 ½ years later?

We've lost ground -- on the Global War on Terror; making North Korea comply with international nonproliferation standards; and discouraging Iran from pursuing its own nuclear ambitions.

The War in Iraq is the reason we're losing ground, and it's the centerpiece of this Administration's failed foreign policies.

In North Korea, the six-party talks have broken down into a stalemate. An unprecedented, albeit failed, demonstration of its ballistic missile technology was flaunted on our Independence Day. Japan and the rest of Asia haven't been more provoked or frightened in recent memory.

In Iran, a breakdown in the Administration's policy resulted in a nuclear stalemate. Iran's nuclear ambitions destabilize the entire Middle East and diminish what should be our priority foreign policy there -- combating Iran as a training ground and launching point for terrorists.

Recent attacks in India, the last week of violence between Israel and Hezbollah, and recently discovered terrorist attempts against the Canadian prime minister and the New York City subway prove our focus must be the War on Terror.

The War in Iraq is a diversion from that focus, and it's a tragedy -- for America, our brave troops in uniform, for the future of our nation, and for the prospect of Middle East peace, which fades every day we stay in Iraq and as violence between Israel and Hezbollah continues.

In each of these three states making up the axis of evil, the situation is worse now than when the President identified them. Emboldened regimes are the consequences of diverting our Armed Forces from the Global War on Terror.

And when ideology trumps practicality in making foreign policy, these statistics illustrating the Administration's failures in the conduct of the War in Iraq should come as no surprise:

The number of insurgents has quadrupled from 5,000 to 20,000 from November 2003 to April 2006;

The average number of daily attacks by insurgents has climbed from 53 to 75, from May 2004 to May 2006;

The number of civilian casualties resulting from sectarian violence has increased by 600 per month – to a total of nearly 1,600. That's equivalent to the losses we sustained in the World Trade Center every other month; and

The "burn-rate" has doubled – from \$4 billion to \$8 billion per month over the past 2 years.

The figures prove chaos reigns in Iraq. Despite the Administration's happy-talk, stability is not taking hold.

We are no closer to our goal of a secure Iraq than we were 3 ½ years ago, nearly 2,600 U.S. casualties and \$400 billion later.

Our preoccupation with Iraq is decimating our Armed Forces, which are now entrenched in a civil war where we don't belong.

Consequently, our hands are tied in response to aggression by North Korea and Iran.

When we invaded Afghanistan and Iraq, we demonstrated to the world our capabilities of 'unleashed might.' But 3 ½ years later, the Administration's conduct of the war and its failed policy has exposed the limits of our military capabilities.

Now we must answer to atrocities at Abu Ghraib; allegations of 24 civilians murdered in Haditha last November; and the rape and murder of an Iraqi woman south of Baghdad following the murder of three members of her family, including her 5-year-old daughter.

America deserves a new direction in its foreign policy. The tragedy of Iraq is perhaps the most solemn reminder of why a change in leadership is long overdue.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the time and yield back.